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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, December 6, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CHRISTMAS UNDERWEAR." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Conversation today is for the Christmas shopper who is buying gifts of lingerie this year. Her shopping list looks something like this perhaps: "Dress slip for Margery Ann, fancy, for parties.... nightgown for Alice, plain and tailored.... pantie set for Jane."

Of all the enticing displays in the stores and of all the tempting pictures in the catalogs at this time of year, none attracts the feminine shopper more than the dainty underwear. All those piles of lace and satin and bits of this and that -- you know how they appeal to a woman's heart. So do I. But some of them won't look so appealing after wearing, sad to say. And some of them that looked like such a bargain for the price won't turn out to be a good buy after all. That darling slip you bought for Margery Ann -- well, the shoulder straps pulled a hole in the lace first thing. That nightgown for Alice that looked like such a serviceable buy was of heavily weighted silk and soon fell to pieces. Those panties for Jane just didn't fit.

Well, somewhere in all the attractive Christmas displays of underwear lies the gift your friend will be grateful for as long as she wears it, but also others that will be a disappointment. Neither price nor first appearance is a sure guide as to which is which.

So I'm passing along to you today some facts from the clothing people at the Bureau of Home Economics -- just some little tips to help you buy successful gifts. Says Clarice Scott of the Bureau who has made a special study of dress slips: "You can buy a silk or synthetic slip at practically any price from 39 cents up. And often you'll find it hard to distinguish immediately between low-grade and high-grade slips in either silk or synthetic fabrics. One slip may look about as good as another. You see, poor-quality fabrics are sized, dyed and pressed to appear at the store as much like good-quality as possible. And low-grade slips have lace or other trimming that gives much the same effect as good-quality material."

Well, the same thing holds for nightgowns, panties and so on. The way to learn about the quality of any garment is to look beneath all this surface niceness. First, examine the fabric to see if it is firm and evenly woven. Pull the fabric between the thumb and finger to see if the yarns shift easily. Often the weave of the fabric isn't properly balanced -- that is, there are too few filling yarns for the number in the warp. This allows the warp yarns to slide first this way and then that after a little wear. Then the fabric takes

on a blistered appearance which spoils the shape of the slip. This is a very common trouble, particularly with French crepes. Price is no safeguard against it, for in higher-priced slips the yarns may shift as badly as in lower-priced garments.

Metal-weighting of silks is a problem for any buyer of ready-made garments It's very hard to distinguish weighted silk from pure-dye silks except when the garment has a label stating that it is "pure-dye silk" or that it contains weighting. Usually heavily weighted silks are low-priced compared with pure-dye. That is only right because their value is less. Compare the feel and looks of two pieces of the same type of fabric. For example, weighted flat crepes have more sheen, are heavier to lift and more slippery than pure-dyes. Sheers feel more wiry and harsh when gathered in your hand. Weighted silks cut along stitching lines and rub into shreds wherever the garment gets wear or friction -- such as under the arms, on the hips, across the shoulders. They sometimes even split while just hanging in the closet.

Ask the salesperson for information about the material and ask for definite information about the weighting or loading of silks and synthetics. Don't be content with an evasive answer like: "We have had no complaints." And read labels with care. So many have carelessly worded or misleading statements that you need to read with extra care.

Color fastness in lingerie silks has had little attention yet. Some materials fade quickly; others change little if any in color. So again, ask for definite information.

Miss Scott suggests that fit and cut are very important in a slip. Good fit has so much to do with durability, looks and comfort. If you are buying a slip for yourself, you'll always be wise to try it on. Of course, when you're buying a Christmas present, you'll have to judge fit as best you can.

You can learn a lot about any piece of underwear by examining the workmanship. Finish and seams can lengthen or lessen the lifetime of your garment and can also make ironing hard or easy. Whatever type of seam and finish is used, be sure the result is flat and smooth, with no bumps or ridges. Be sure seams and finishes equal the fabric in durability. Close fine stitching holds better than the long, loose stitches that you find on poor-quality underwear.

A last word now about shoulder straps -- a most important item on dress slips. If the slip is made with lace, the strap should be anchored way down on the fabric, never on the lace. Machine-made slips usually have straps of silk like the slip. These wear well. On hand-made slips the straps are usually straight-cut folds stitched once and turned. These, like the slips, are neat and dainty but not the most durable. Ribbon is rarely used on slips except on the lower-grades.

Well, there are just a few tips on buying gifts for Christmas that will be appreciated long after the Christmas day is over.

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